

AIR POWER IN MOOTW: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS  
OF USING NO-FLY ZONES TO SUPPORT  
NATIONAL OBJECTIVES

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## *Preface*

The purpose of this section is to provide the reader with a frame of reference from which this paper was written. I deployed in November 1990 to Taif Air Base, Saudi Arabia, and flew the F-111F in Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm. I returned to the Gulf several times to fly the F-111F out of Incirlik Air Base, Turkey, in support of Operation Provide Comfort (OPC). After I transitioned to the F-15E in 1992, I also flew that aircraft on OPC missions. I periodically deployed to Aviano Air Base, Italy, in 1994 and 1995, and I flew the F-15E in support of Operation Deny Flight.

As a line aviator during Operation Desert Storm, I was fully aware of our objectives and what we needed to do in order to accomplish those objectives. During Operations Provide Comfort and Deny Flight, I understood our air objectives, but the U.S. national objectives and the methods with which we were to achieve those objectives were less clear. The differences in the rules of engagement, the execution, and the unclear results of these latter two operations have led me to conduct this research. My intent has been to clarify the national objectives of these operations and to analyze the operational and strategic effectiveness of air power in support of these objectives.

I would like to thank my research advisor Dr. Matthew Schwonek for helping me to focus on the relevant issues. His direction and guidance have been invaluable.

### *Abstract*

The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate the effectiveness of no-fly zones and to assess the contextual factors that influence success. The measures of success for the no-fly zones are: a) achievement of air objectives b) congruency between air objectives and higher level objectives, and c) actual effects of each no-fly zone on higher level objectives and a desired end state. The air objectives of each no-fly zone has been to prevent flights of all aircraft not in support of the allied forces, to protect civilians from aerial bombardment, and to provide air supremacy for other missions. The no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina achieved limited success in achieving air objectives, while the two no-fly zones over Iraq have been very successful. The air objectives of each no-fly zone have been congruent with national objectives. The success of the November 1995 negotiations in Dayton, Ohio is testament to the positive progress toward all of the long term objectives for Bosnia-Herzegovina. The long term effects of operations in Iraq are unclear. To overcome limitations imposed by the physical environment, proper synchronization between all forces will be essential. Rules of engagement for military operations should simplify coordination, integration, and identification among forces so that execution can be decentralized. The long term impact of U.S. military presence in the Gulf should be studied further. If ending the oppression of the Shiites in southern Iraq is a U.S. objective, then a reevaluation of the forces in theater is necessary. This study supports the hypothesis that no-fly zones are an effective strategy for U.S. forces.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

In March 1991, the United States, in conjunction with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), established a no-fly zone over northern Iraq, and in August 1992, established a second zone over southern Iraq. By April 1993, the United States was enforcing three no-fly zones, the third zone being over Bosnia-Herzegovina. The international community, including the United Nations (UN) and NATO, now commonly views the no-fly zone as a viable means to enforce international sanctions.<sup>1</sup> If the United States continues to enforce no-fly zones, military planners and commanders should understand the past effectiveness of this strategy in achieving air objectives and in supporting national political and military objectives. The purpose of this analysis is to evaluate the effectiveness of the no-fly zone as a military strategy and to assess the contextual factors that influence success.

### **The Problem**

The end of the Cold War and the unmatched success of the U.S.-led forces during the 1991 Operation Desert Storm have led to significantly increased United States participation in international conflict resolution and to a greater willingness to employ U.S. forces. Before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, UN actions to resolve conflicts

typically did not include enforcement actions, because of the mistrust between the United States and the Soviet Union. Neither country would support participation of the other's military forces. The change in attitude of Moscow in the late 1980s and the resultant assertive approach of the United States and the UN have paved the way for a remarkable increase in UN peace operations.<sup>2</sup> The leadership and success of the United States during Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm communicated to the international community that with U.S. (and NATO) participation, the UN could be a much more active and effective organization.

Secretary of Defense Les Aspin's 1993 Bottom-Up Review set the stage for momentous reductions in the size of the U.S. active duty force. The review focused on a military capable of fighting and winning two major regional conflicts, rather than a massive arms build-up to match the Soviet Union. The result was a decrease from eighteen Army divisions in 1990 to ten, from 22 Air Force wings to thirteen, and from thirteen Navy carrier battle groups to eleven, and further reductions are likely.<sup>3</sup> Projected levels of uniformed armed forces in 1999 will be almost 25 percent lower than 1993 levels.<sup>4</sup>

Even after a 40 percent reduction in the size of the U.S. military over the past five years, U.S. military commitments overseas have dramatically increased. Between 1945 and 1988, the UN conducted thirteen peace operations. Between 1988 and 1995, the UN authorized and commanded twenty-six operations. In addition, the United States organized and led other contingency operations, such as Restore Hope in Somalia, Uphold Democracy in Haiti, and Provide Comfort in Iraq.<sup>5</sup> Although this increase in the number of U.S. overseas operations appears to be in conflict with the various administrations' desires to balance the budget, these operations are becoming more necessary with the



reduction in overseas bases. Conflict prevention and resolution often dictate intervention and international action.<sup>6</sup> As forces pull out of overseas bases, the United States must maintain military working relationships with nations that would likely be our coalition partners in the event of a crisis.

U.S. leaders are searching for low-risk, efficient methods of employing military forces to support foreign policy. The no-fly zone is potentially one such strategy. The effectiveness of U.S. air forces in combating the world's fourth largest army in Iraq, with only minimal casualties, demonstrated the power and capabilities of technically and numerically superior air forces. If air power alone can achieve military objectives, then the risk of casualties and hostages will be much lower for the overall operation. The obvious question remains whether or not air power can achieve those objectives. Although the U.S. military has exhaustively analyzed and critiqued most other military strategies, no-fly zones have not undergone such scrutiny.

## **The Need**

The 1990s has seen a growth in the media coverage of world events. As the media publicizes growing numbers of conflicts throughout the world, and while the U.S. maintains the world's most technically superior and proficient military, the National Command Authority will most likely continue to offer military support to resolve these conflicts. Force projection and peace enforcement roles, such as implementing no-fly zones, will be the focus of many of these operations. If the U.S. is to employ no-fly zones in the future, a comprehensive critical analysis of this relatively new strategy is necessary.

The results of this study will also provide a foundation for further research of no-fly zones and other military strategies.

## **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of this study is that the no-fly zone is an effective strategy for U.S. and NATO Air Forces. Support of this hypothesis relies on the answers to four preliminary questions:

1. What are the requirements for effective employment of air power supporting military operations other than war (MOOTW)?
2. What objectives and strategies are no-fly zones over Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina designed to support and achieve?
3. What contextual factors have had the greatest impact on the effectiveness of no-fly zones?
4. What effects have no-fly zones had, and to what extent have they achieved air objectives and supported national political and military objectives?

The answers to the first three questions provide the foundation for determining the contribution of past and on-going no-fly zones toward the desired objectives. Some critics of using air power in operations other than war have incorrectly measured the success or failure of no-fly zones only by their impact on political objectives. This approach is inadequate. Leaders might create a no-fly zone to shape the environment for other instruments of power rather than to achieve national objectives. Other critics have assumed a direct correlation between the success of a contingency operation and the success of the respective no-fly zone. Success or failure at strategic or operational levels does not imply the same at lower levels. No-fly zones should have specific air objectives. Commanders should specifically design and execute no-fly zones to achieve air objectives and to support higher level objectives.

The specific measures of success for the no-fly zones supporting Operations Provide Comfort, Southern Watch, and Deny Flight are: a) have the no-fly zones achieved their air objectives? b) are the air objectives congruent with higher level objectives and national interests? and c) has each no-fly zone produced the desired end state? Although no-fly zones have distinct objectives that might be in line with higher level objectives, the no-fly zones and their respective operations might not bring about the expected results. Answers to these questions have led to a determination of the general effectiveness of past and present no-fly zones and of the no-fly zone as a future strategy for U.S. and NATO air forces. The results have also led to specific recommendations of how to increase the efficiency of employing air power in future military operations other than war.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Institute for National Strategic Studies, *Strategic Assessment 1996* (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 1996), 162.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 172.

<sup>4</sup> T. A. Mehuron, "Defense Jobs in a Free-Fall," *Air Force Magazine* 78, no. 8 (August 1995): 11.

<sup>5</sup> Institute for National Strategic Studies, 128.

<sup>6</sup> Department of State, "Clinton Administration Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations (PDD25)," in *War and Conflict Resolution*, ed. Maj Ed Marsalis et al. (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, January 1997), 3.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review Of The Literature**

It is relevant to review what other authors have stated about the implementation and effectiveness of no-fly zones, but there is a lack of published information on this subject. Typically, studies on Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina have addressed issues other than the specific effectiveness and utility of the no-fly zones.<sup>1</sup>

### **Requirements for Effective Air Power**

Seven tenets of air power provide the foundation for mission success. They focus on the unique aerospace environment and the capabilities of aerospace forces. These tenets are centralized control and decentralized execution, flexibility and versatility, priority, synergy, balance, concentration, and persistence.<sup>2</sup> Effective control and decentralized execution tie together the remaining tenets to achieve unity of purpose and unity of effort, and therefore are the most critical to the effective employment of air power.

The joint air tasking cycle provides a means of centrally planning and controlling air operations. At the highest level of command, the Joint Forces Air Component Commander (JFACC) approves the air tasking order (ATO), which tasks tactical units with targets, times, and munitions, often including specific points of impact. After units receive the ATO, line aviators plan the tactics they will use to execute the mission. Once

airborne, rules of engagement (ROE) govern the actions of the aviators. The ROE establish the framework for decentralized execution. In order to give operators the ability to respond to and exploit unforeseeable events, ROE must permit them to make timely decisions in the air.<sup>3</sup> To preserve air power's responsiveness and tactical flexibility, decisions of whether or not to engage or to fire ordnance must rest with the operators.

A core competency of the U.S. Air Force is air and space superiority. Theater air superiority provides freedom of action for air forces and allows ground forces to operate more effectively. It also denies those advantages to the enemy. With control of the air, air power can focus on additional missions, such as support for various ground operations. Establishing a no-fly zone employs air power in the mission of air superiority to the extreme of achieving air supremacy. The objective is not only local control of the air but complete denial of the air to the opposing forces.

Essential to the air superiority mission are effective coordination, integration, and proper identification to avoid attacking friendly aircraft.<sup>4</sup> Decentralized execution enhances the effectiveness of tactical units but makes integration and coordination more difficult. It can increase the possibility of fratricide unless forces clearly adhere to coordination and identification procedures. In a low threat environment, protection of friendly forces becomes the highest priority, and there can be a tendency to place more control on the execution of the missions. Centralized execution might reduce the probability of fratricide, but it will also reduce the flexibility and effectiveness of the mission.

## **Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW)**

The United States will use political, economic, and military instruments of power to protect national interests. The type of interests that are threatened and the level of threat to our national interests determine which instruments of power that the U.S. will use, and to what degree. For those conflicts that do not threaten core interests, that is, national survival, the United States will use the military sparingly and for limited objectives.<sup>5</sup> The United States has employed the military for limited objectives in numerous conflicts during the past five years, and so the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff has published doctrine specific to these types of operations. The general goals of MOOTW are to deter war, support national objectives, and return to a state of peace.<sup>6</sup> Because these operations are for limited objectives, they involve limited numbers of personnel and are generally shorter in duration than war.<sup>7</sup> They are typically operations involving more than one service, plus governmental and non-governmental organizations.<sup>8</sup>

## **Tactical Air Power in Operations Other Than War**

U.S. joint doctrine puts forward six principles for operations other than war: objective, unity of effort, security, restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy.<sup>9</sup> Although the commander's intent is to employ air power to support these principles, a 1994 Naval War College report concludes that air power supporting MOOTW has had limited success in balancing the principles of restraint, security, and unity of effort.

The situationally dependent variables of restraint and threat level affect the security of air forces and the effectiveness of air power in MOOTW. Forces restrained by complicated rules of engagement (ROE) can reduce air power's flexibility and its ability to

react in a dynamic environment. This results in decreased credibility and security of air forces. When combined with a high threat level, commanders must reduce these restrictions.<sup>10</sup>

Joint Publication 3-0 recognizes the difficulty in attaining unity of effort, primarily because it hinges on unity of command. The numerous actors involved in MOOTW, including civilian agencies, coalition partners, and alliances, and loosely defined command relationships have made the establishment of unity of command a difficult task.<sup>11</sup> Difficulties in establishing unity of command, combined with complicated ROE can severely degrade unity of effort.<sup>12</sup>

### **Air Occupation**

Historically, ground forces have occupied enemy territory, but a recently rekindled debate among military theorists has taken up the idea of air occupation, the concept that primarily air and space power can control specific activities of an opponent on land and sea as well as in the air. A useable definition of air occupation offered by Major Gary Cox is “the use of air and space power in the intrusive control of specified territory, or territorial activities, of an adversarial nation or group for a specified period of time.”<sup>13</sup> The effectiveness of air occupation is highly dependent upon the desired degree of control, the objectives, and the environment. If only limited control of territory or activities is the objective, such as prevention of oil exports from a specific area, then air occupation is quite feasible and may be very effective. However, if the objective is to ensure that ground forces do not attack villages nestled in dense jungle, then the attempt at air occupation will likely fail.

Air occupation is a contentious term. The concept should provide focus for future doctrine development rather than promote the Air Force as capable of performing missions traditionally reserved for ground forces. The objectives of an operation will dictate the required level of control. In light of the contextual factors of the environment, planners should understand the capabilities of various military forces and task those that are capable of best achieving the desired control.

### **Operational Design and Synchronization in No-Fly Zones**

In any operation that includes ground and air forces, the joint cooperation and synchronization of these forces are critical to the operation's success. The three no-fly zones in which the United States has participated during the past five years have had varying success, indirectly related to the synchronization, or lack thereof, between air and ground forces. Air power has definite limitations in the degree of control it can exert over an opponent. The lack of ground forces in support of Operation Southern Watch has severely restrained the ability to protect the Shiites on the ground. Operation Deny Flight produced mixed results, with the Bosnian Serb forces on the ground continuously testing the threat of air strikes and the credibility of the UN and NATO. Operation Provide Comfort on the other hand has successfully employed both ground and air forces to stop the oppression of the Kurds in northern Iraq.<sup>14</sup>

The United States will become more involved in MOOTW in the next decade, and the contingency operations in Southwest Asia show no signs of ending soon. Joint guidance for the execution of these operations is now available. The multiple actors and limited



objectives have caused difficulty in assuring restraint, security, and unity of effort for air power supporting MOOTW.

Following the unmatched success of Operation Desert Storm, the idea of air occupation, or the air control of specific activities of another nation, has become an appealing military option. It is critical, however, to recognize air power limitations and how to minimize those limitations. Commanders must recognize when additional forces are required and must adequately synchronize all forces to achieve the desired objectives.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Maj David E. Peterson, "The No-Fly Zones in Iraq: Air Occupation," (Ft Leavenworth, KS: Army Command and General Staff College, 1996), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Air Force Manual (AFM) 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, vol. 1, March 1992, 8.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>5</sup> Larry Cable and Ralph Milsap, "Small Wars and Insurgencies," in *War and Conflict Resolution*, ed. Maj Ed Marsalis et al. (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, January 1997), 14.

<sup>6</sup> Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, 1 February 1995, I-3.

<sup>7</sup> Institute for National Strategic Studies, 157.

<sup>8</sup> Joint Pub 3-0, V-1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., V-2.

<sup>10</sup> LCDR William H. Johnson, "A Piece of the Puzzle: Tactical Air Power in Operations Other Than War," (Newport, RI: Naval War College, 12 November 1994), 20.

<sup>11</sup> Joint Pub 3-0, V-2

<sup>12</sup> Johnson, 20.

<sup>13</sup> Maj Gary Cox, "Airpower as a Tool of Foreign Policy: Air Occupation," in *War and Conflict Resolution*, ed. Maj Ed Marsalis et al. (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, January 1997), 21

<sup>14</sup> Maj John N.T. Shanahan, "The Roles of Operational Design and Synchronization in No-Fly Zones: Tactical Success, Strategic Failure, and the Missing Link," (Newport, RI: Naval Command and Staff College, 14 June 1996), 13

## **Chapter 3**

### **Objectives And Strategy**

Operational strategies and objectives should follow a clear, congruent hierarchy that links them to national goals. Each strategy is designed to achieve specific objectives and to support higher level strategies. At the highest level is the National Security Strategy, which provides guidance for the National Military Strategy, which in turn is the foundation for military commanders' development of regional objectives and strategies. In this need for clear guidance and objectives, no-fly zones are no different from any other operation.

#### **United States National Security Strategy**

For broad guidance, the National Command Authority has established the United States National Security Strategy (NSS) of Engagement and Enlargement. The three primary goals of the NSS are to enhance U.S. security, promote prosperity at home, and promote democracy.<sup>1</sup> The NSS focuses on the stability of several regions throughout the world to support these central goals. Integrated regional approaches reflect long term policies of the United States are tailored to the environments of the respective regions.

In Europe, the U.S. foreign policy concerning the former Yugoslavia has five goals:<sup>2</sup>

1. Sustaining a political settlement in Bosnia that preserves the country's territorial integrity and provides a viable future for all its peoples.

2. Preventing the spread of the conflict into a broader Balkan war that could threaten both allies and the stability of new democratic states in Central and Eastern Europe.
3. Stemming the destabilizing flow of refugees from the conflict.
4. Halting the slaughter of innocents.
5. Helping to support NATO's central role in Europe while maintaining our role in shaping Europe's security architecture.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), consisting of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Oman, is incapable of the unilaterally dealing with Iraq as a threat.<sup>3</sup> As long as Iraq remains a threat to the stability of the Gulf region, and given the region's importance, a United States commitment is necessary. The U.S. must maintain strong ties with the GCC nations to aid in deterring threats against the stability of a region vital to our national interests.<sup>4</sup> In Southwest Asia, the United States remains focused on the following goals concerning Iraq:<sup>5</sup>

1. Deterring threats to regional stability, particularly from Iraq and Iran as long as those states pose a threat to U.S. interests, to other states in the region and to their own citizens.
2. Ensuring Iraq's compliance with all the relevant Security Council resolutions.
3. Preventing the oppression of Iraq's people through Operations Provide Comfort and Southern Watch.
4. Encouraging members of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to work closely on collective defense and security arrangements, helping individual GCC states meet their appropriate defense requirements, and maintaining our bilateral defense agreements.

### **National Military Strategy**

Flowing from the National Security Strategy, is the United States National Military Strategy (NMS) of Flexible and Selective Engagement. The two objectives of the NMS are promoting stability and thwarting aggression. The concepts of overseas presence and power projection facilitate the accomplishment of these objectives.<sup>6</sup> Regional unified combatant commanders have missions to support the NMS in the context of their

respective regions. The mission of United States European Command (USEUCOM), which includes the former Yugoslavia, reemphasizes regional security, regional stability, and support for U.S. interests in Europe.<sup>7</sup> Iraq is in United States Central Command's (USCENTCOM) area of responsibility. USCENTCOM's mission includes four goals: promoting and protecting U.S. interests, assuring uninterrupted access to regional resources, assisting friendly states in providing for their own security and contributing to their collective defense, and deterring attempts by hostile regional states to achieve geopolitical gains by threat or use of force.<sup>8</sup>

### **United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

United States participation in international organizations such as the UN and NATO significantly affect U.S. international policy. As these organizations have become more active, U.S. involvement overseas has consequently increased. The United States has repeatedly stated its commitment to support UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions concerning Iraq and the former Yugoslavia, and NATO air power has been a primary tool for enforcing those resolutions.<sup>9</sup> Chapter VII of the United Nations Charter authorizes the use of armed forces to take action necessary for international peace and security.<sup>10</sup> The UN has passed over 30 resolutions concerning Iraq since the invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and over 100 resolutions concerning the former Yugoslavia since 1991.

#### **Bosnia-Herzegovina**

UNSC resolutions utilizing Chapter VII authority provided the justification for military involvement in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In October 1992, the UN established a ban on military flights in the airspace of Bosnia-Herzegovina. In March 1993, the UN

authorized “all necessary measures to ensure compliance with the ban.”<sup>11</sup> In May, the UN declared the towns of Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zepa, Gorazde, Bihac, and Srebrenica to be safe areas, free from armed attacks, and in June authorized the support of UN Protection Forces (UNPROFOR) through the use of air power. In March 1994, the UN called for forces capable of providing close air support in the defense of UNPROFOR. In June and July of 1995, the UN requested these forces to be available for the protection of the established safe areas.<sup>12</sup>

A primary enforcement tool for the United Nations in the former Yugoslavia has been NATO air power. In 1992, NATO announced its support on a case by case basis for peace operations under the responsibility of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the UN.<sup>13</sup> From October 1992 to April 1993, NATO Airborne Early Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft monitored the airspace over Bosnia-Herzegovina and reported violations to UN authorities. In April 1993, NATO began Operation Deny Flight, the purpose of which was to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina, to provide close air support for UN troops on the ground, and to conduct approved air strikes against targets that threatened UN designated safe areas.<sup>14</sup>

The purpose of the UN resolutions establishing a ban on military flights in Bosnia-Herzegovina was to reduce the level of the conflict, to simplify enforcement of the arms embargo established in September 1991, and to promote the safety of humanitarian assistance efforts.<sup>15</sup> After the UN designated safe areas, then the protection of these areas from air attack became another goal of the no-fly zone. The primary air objective of the no-fly zone was to prevent flights of all aircraft over Bosnia-Herzegovina that were not in support of UN operations.

## **Iraq**

The United States has repeatedly announced full support for UNSC resolutions concerning Iraq and the Persian Gulf region and stated that U.S. regional foreign policy will not change until Iraq complies with all of the resolutions.<sup>16</sup> UNSC resolution 688 demanded the end to the repression of civilian populations and full access by humanitarian organizations to those in need.<sup>17</sup> U.S. Secretary of Defense William Perry stated in March 1996 that U.S. forces are in Iraq to protect the interests of the United States and its allies, to deter aggression, and to demonstrate commitment to our allies through overseas presence of credible combat forces.<sup>18</sup>

Through Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq, the U.S. is committed to preventing the oppression of the Kurdish population by the Iraqi government.<sup>19</sup> As part of that operation, the no-fly zone is designed to support humanitarian efforts by limiting the capability of the Iraqi military in the region. The primary air objective of the no-fly zone is to prevent flights of all aircraft north of the 36-degree north parallel.

Similarly, a stated goal of Operation Southern Watch has been to prevent the oppression of the Shiite population in southern Iraq.<sup>20</sup> The operation also supports USCENTCOM's goals of ensuring an uninterrupted flow of oil, assisting the GCC, and deterring hostile military actions by Iraq. The primary air objective of the southern no-fly zone is to prevent air operations south of the 32-degree north parallel.

## **Contextual Factors**

Development of operational objectives and strategies should take into account the contextual factors that form the operational and strategic environments. How the military

commander employs his forces in consideration of these factors determines the success of the mission. Political, international, economic, leadership, cultural, physical, and military factors all influence objective and strategy development. The environments of Bosnia-Herzegovina and Iraq are dramatically different and have strongly influenced the conduct of operations.

Among the most important political and cultural factors that influenced enforcement of the no-fly zones over Bosnia and Iraq are the American public's sensitivity to casualties and reluctance to spend money overseas without a clear threat to national security. Additionally, mounting pressure to reduce the defense budget has put more pressure on politicians to limit U.S. involvement overseas. Even though there were numerous reports of atrocious war crimes in Bosnia and a threat that the conflict could spread beyond its borders, the American public was hesitant to put the lives of U.S. service members at risk or to risk foreign entanglements. This poses a difficult political and military problem. U.S. military participation was necessary for regional stability, but commanders had to employ forces in such a way as to minimize exposure to hostile fire. The no-fly zones would expose a relatively small number of service members to hostile fire and a small force could theoretically impose control over a large area. The establishment of the no-fly zones appeared to be an efficient strategy for supporting regional objectives.

NATO, under the leadership of the United States, agreed to enforce the no-fly zone over Bosnia.<sup>21</sup> NATO established restrictive rules of engagement (ROE) to limit the possibility of fratricide among NATO and UN forces. For example, when a NATO aircraft detected a violator, the pilot would issue a verbal warning over international radio frequencies, stating that if the aircraft did not depart the area then it would be engaged. If

the aircraft did not respond, then permission to engage had to come directly from the NATO commander (Commander, 5th Allied Tactical Air Force).<sup>22</sup> This was a slow process, and the communications requirements between NATO and the UN often slowed these procedures further.

The ROE for Operations over Iraq are similar to those for Deny Flight, but because the air threat is much higher in Iraq, the ROE for operations are less restrictive. The ROE and a decentralized execution structure provide allied aircraft with a greater self-defense capability. Allied aircraft over Iraq can actively engage Iraqi military aircraft violating the no-fly zones without getting permission from the joint task force commanders. Coalition aircraft adopted more restrictive engagement criteria after the attack on a U.S. helicopter by an F-15C in 1994, but the ROE still empower aircraft commanders to efficiently execute their missions. Straight-forward engagement criteria permit aviators to effectively evaluate potential violations of the no-fly zones and to engage if necessary. Pilots do not need to negotiate time-consuming command and control procedures to enforce compliance with the no-fly zone.<sup>23</sup>

The physical environment of Bosnia is drastically different from that of Iraq, posing enforcement problems. In the former Yugoslavia, mountainous terrain with deep valleys enabled helicopters to evade detection. The flat desert terrain adjacent to the no-fly zone borders in Iraq eliminates the capability of Iraqi aircraft to sneak into the area undetected. The absence of mountains and valleys in these areas also produces very little ground clutter on the radar of fighter aircraft, making detection relatively easy. Unlike the usually clear weather conditions over Iraq, the cloud coverage over Bosnia often made enforcement of the airspace impossible, particularly when combined with the ROE. Allied



aircraft were not permitted to fly below 10,000 feet unless specifically authorized by the NATO commander.<sup>24</sup> When cloud ceilings were well above ground level, but below 10,000 feet, NATO aircraft could not visually identify helicopters, eliminating any possibility of enforcing the ban on all military aircraft.

The National Security Strategy and the National Military Strategy provide general guidance for operational objectives so that military operations will support national goals and policies. The United States' commitments to the United Nations and to NATO have significantly influenced U.S. foreign policy on Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Development of operational objectives and strategies should take into account the contextual factors that form the operational and strategic environments. The American public's sensitivity to casualties and the drastic differences in the physical environments of Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina have impacted the implementation and effectiveness of no-fly zones.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *A National Security Strategy of Engagement and Enlargement (NSS)*, February 1996, 11-12.

<sup>2</sup> *NSS*, 35.

<sup>3</sup> LtCol Mathias Knorr, "After the Persian Gulf War: A Multinational Gulf Security Force," (Carlisle Barracks, PA, 11 March 1991), 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, ii.

<sup>5</sup> *NSS*, 43.

<sup>6</sup> *National Military Strategy of the United States of America (NMS)*, 1995, I.

<sup>7</sup> "USEUCOM Mission Statement," n.p.; on-line, Internet, 28 February, 1997, available from <http://199.56.154.3/library/sep/sep00c.html>.

<sup>8</sup> "USCENTCOM's Mission," n.p.; on-line, Internet, 28 February, 1997, available from <http://ccfs.centcom.mil/mission.html>.

<sup>9</sup> President Clinton, "U.S. Actions to Preserve Stability in the Persian Gulf," *U.S. Department of State Dispatch* 5, no. 42 (17 October 1994): 689.

<sup>10</sup> "Charter of the United Nations," n.p.; on-line, Internet, 15 January 1997, available from <http://www.un.org/Overview/Charter/contents.html>.

## Notes

<sup>11</sup> “United Nations Security Council Documents,” n.p.; on-line, Internet, 15 January 1997, available from <http://www.un.org/Docs/sc.htm>.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> “NATO’s Role in Peacekeeping in the Former Yugoslavia,” NATO Fact Sheet No. 4, September 1996, n.p.; on-line, Internet, 15 January 1997, available from <http://www.nato.int/docu/facts/fs4.htm>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Madeleine K. Albright, “U.S. Policy Toward Iraq,” *U.S. Department of State Dispatch* 6, no. 34 (21 August 1995): 653.

<sup>17</sup> “United Nations Security Council Documents,” Internet.

<sup>18</sup> Department of Defense, *Report of the Secretary of Defense to the President and the Congress, March 1996* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1996), 8.

<sup>19</sup> NSS, 43.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of NATO and Western European involvement, see “The United Nations’ Predicament in the Former Yugoslavia,” by Age Eknes.

<sup>22</sup> From author’s personal recollections and experiences.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Implementation and Effectiveness**

The air objectives of all three no-fly zones have been 1) to prevent flights of all aircraft in the assigned airspace that were not in support of the allied forces, 2) to protect UN designated safe areas in Bosnia and innocent civilians in northern and southern Iraq from aerial bombardment, and 3) to provide air supremacy for other missions in support of the respective operations. The no-fly zones support significantly different national objectives. Since these are high level, broad range objectives, determining the effectiveness of the no-fly zones' support of these objectives is subjective, but relatively easy to assess.

#### **Bosnia-Herzegovina**

The no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina achieved limited success in achieving air objectives. Prior to Operation Deny Flight, when violations of the ban on military flights generated no consequences, hundreds of violations occurred. Once military enforcement of the no-fly zone began in April 1993, the violations by fixed wing aircraft ceased, with two exceptions. In February 1994, six Serb Galeb ground attack aircraft entered the airspace over Bosnia on bombing missions. NATO fighters shot down four of the aircraft, and the remaining two departed the airspace.<sup>1</sup> In November of the same year, Serb

aircraft again launched out of Udbina airfield in Croatia to carry out strikes in Bosnian airspace. In response to these violations, NATO aircraft successfully attacked the airfield, and no other fixed wing violations occurred.

Although the established procedures appeared to be highly effective against fixed wing aircraft, the command and control structure, coupled with the restrictive ROE, in fact established an environment in which an aggressive attack by fixed wing fighters could have succeeded. Deny Flight aircraft could act in self-defense, but the ROE required them to avoid an engagement until the NATO commander issued clearance to engage.<sup>2</sup> This created an environment in which aircraft demonstrating an offensive capability could have entered the area, quickly executed an attack, and then exited the airspace. This was not the scenario in 1994 when four Galebs were shot down. These were ground attack aircraft with virtually no capability of conducting an offensive attack against Deny Flight aircraft. The Galebs also successfully released their weapons.

Enforcement of the ban on helicopter flights was less successful. Multiple violations continued to occur throughout the operation. Owing to the arduous coordination with numerous actors, the difficulty in identifying helicopters as military, and the physical environment, NATO was unable to make significant changes in ROE that would end these violations.

Successes of the no-fly zone were the protection of safe areas from aerial attacks, and the creation a permissive environment in which NATO and the UNPROFOR could execute other operations.<sup>3</sup> The UNPROFOR encountered problems with ground forces, but these problems would have increased in the absence of the no-fly zone. Military

helicopters could have quickly re-supplied Bosnian Serb and Muslim units, and the UNPROFOR ground units would have had little protection against air attacks.

The air objectives of the no-fly zone over Bosnia-Herzegovina were congruent with the following national objectives: 1) prevent the spread of the conflict, 2) halt the slaughter of innocent civilians, 3) support NATO's central role in Europe, and 4) support relevant UN Security resolutions. The ban on aircraft reduced the options of the warring parties, specifically the long range strike capability of the aircraft, and therefore decreased the overall level of the conflict. Limiting this long range capability and the level of the conflict reduced the chances of strikes being conducted across the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Ending the aerial bombardment of cities reduced the killing of innocent civilians. The no-fly zone was a tool to shape the environment, and it effectively added a dimension of protection for the safe areas.<sup>4</sup> NATO's role in supporting and enforcing the UN resolutions was invaluable in working toward long term objectives. NATO, led by U.S. forces, provided equipment not possessed by the UN. High technology aircraft and equipment increased the efficiency and effectiveness of both air and ground peacekeeping forces, confirming the value of NATO in Europe and its dedication for supporting the UN.<sup>5</sup>

The success of the November 1995 negotiations in Dayton, Ohio is testament to the positive progress toward all of the long term objectives for Bosnia-Herzegovina. The conflict has remained within the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina, NATO demonstrated that it can play a key role in European stability, and the U.S. fully supported UNSC resolutions throughout the conflict. One high level objective that was difficult to attain was ending the killing of innocent civilians in UN designated safe areas. Although the no-fly zone was

designed to support this objective through protection from air attacks, the protection from ground forces is not an objective of a “no-fly” zone. Other measures were necessary to achieve that objective. Threats of air strikes were successful in some areas, but problems associated with enforcement and, in some cases, the reluctance to consistently carry out those threats decreased the credibility of UN and NATO forces.<sup>6</sup> This led to provocations and culminated in the Bosnian-Serb attacks on the safe areas of Srebrenica and Zepa.<sup>7</sup>

## **Iraq**

The two no-fly zones over Iraq have been successful in achieving air objectives. Occasional attempts by Iraqi aircraft to test the allied no-fly zones have efficiently led to the destruction of those aircraft. This efficiency has been a result of the decentralized air execution structures for operations over Iraq. Along with the elimination of Iraqi aircraft in the two areas of operation has come an end to the use of aircraft against innocent civilians and a permissive environment for other allied military actions.

These zones also support higher level objectives and national interests. Through overseas presence and power projection, the U.S. and NATO have deterred Iraqi offensive operations and have assured access to regional resources. In October 1994, Saddam Hussein moved troops south into positions threatening Kuwait. The U.S. undertook Operation Vigilant Warrior and deployed 165 aircraft and 36,000 troops, successfully forcing the Iraqi troops to withdraw.<sup>8</sup> Although the operation was costly and took longer than anticipated, the forward deployed units and the established working relationships with allied and joint forces resulting from the no-fly zone operations contributed to the success of the operation. The U.S. requires permission from the host nation to deploy forces to a

foreign country. Deploying additional forces also requires permission, but it is easier than an initial deployment. Additionally, an advance team will preferably precede military operations to set up command and control systems and to coordinate with the host nation. These systems were already in place in Saudi Arabia as a result of Operation Southern Watch. Both of the no-fly zones over Iraq have adequately supported stability in the Gulf, and they are supporting the defense capability of the GCC. The U.S. has successfully demonstrated its resolve to support the GCC in protecting the sovereignty of Kuwait and other member nations.

The U.S. established the no-fly zones over Iraq to enforce UNSC resolutions and to curb the oppression of the Kurds and the Shiites. Although the UN is still having problems with Iraq's compliance with the UNSC resolutions, the aerial umbrella and forward deployed forces are providing support for the agencies tasked to monitor Iraq's actions. As in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the elimination of Saddam's air power in the northern and southern regions has removed a significant military capability. This action is congruent with the intent to stop the oppression of Iraqi civilians.

The positive effects of the no-fly zones over Iraq have been the enhanced protection of Kuwait and other nations possessing critical resources and the conduct of successful humanitarian operations in northern Iraq. Operation Provide Comfort in northern Iraq has been a joint operation within the boundaries of Iraq that has relied upon the protection provided by the no-fly zone. Ground forces and humanitarian agencies are accomplishing that mission in an environment free of Iraqi aircraft and with the support of various other Air Force assets.

Operation Southern Watch on the other hand has had vastly different effects toward ending the oppression of the Shiites. Southern Watch is strictly an air operation that has no mandate or capability to prevent oppression of the Shiites other than from aerial bombardment. While the no-fly zone has been in place, the Iraqi government has drained the marshes that have supported the Shiites for thousands of years. These actions, combined with artillery attacks, have reduced the Shiite population in the region by 75 percent over the past few years.<sup>9</sup> The no-fly zone by itself has been unable to control such activities.

Progress toward long term stability in the Gulf is unclear. Saddam's sporadic movement of troops and reluctance to fully comply with all UNSC resolutions has continued to test U.S. resolve in both regions and will continue to do so in the future. The long term effects that a large U.S. contingent will have on the strength of the GCC is unknown. GCC states might become dependent on U.S. intervention in the event of a crisis. This dilemma will be more of a challenge the longer that Operations Provide Comfort and Southern Watch continue.<sup>10</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> "NATO's Role in Peacekeeping in the Former Yugoslavia"

<sup>2</sup> From author's personal recollections and experiences.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Tarnoff, "U.S. Policy on Bosnia and Assistance to UNPROFOR," *U.S. Department of State Dispatch* 6, no. 26 (26 June 1995): 531.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 531.

<sup>5</sup> Brooks L. Bash, "The Role of United States Airpower in Peacekeeping," (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University School of Advanced Airpower Studies), 42.

<sup>6</sup> Institute for National Strategic Studies, 139.

<sup>7</sup> "United Nations Security Council Documents," Internet.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>9</sup> President Clinton, "Status of Efforts to Obtain Iraq's Compliance with UNSC Resolutions," *U.S. Department of State Dispatch* 5, no. 45 (7 November 1994): 749.

<sup>10</sup> Bash, 43.



## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusions And Recommendations**

The purpose of this analysis is to draw a conclusion as to the general effectiveness of the no-fly zone as a military strategy and to assess the contextual factors that influence success. The measures of success for each of the no-fly zones supporting Operations Provide Comfort, Southern Watch, and Deny Flight are: a) achievement of air objectives b) congruency between air and higher level objectives, and c) actual effects of each no-fly zone on higher level objectives and a desired end state.

Distinct contextual and operational factors have influenced the varied successes of the three no-fly zones. Clearly the physical environment impacts no-fly zone enforcement. Mountainous terrain and dense foliage decrease the effectiveness of air-to-air radars, especially against slow moving targets. Realizing the limitations this puts on the air superiority and command and control aircraft is important. To overcome these limitations, other forces are necessary, and proper synchronization among those forces will be essential.

The concept of centralized control and decentralized execution is a key tenet of effective air power employment, and is the key to success for achieving air objectives. Decentralized execution promotes tactical flexibility, security of air assets, and the credibility of forces in theater. An argument for more centralized execution is that it

provides a link between forces that have difficulty in coordination and integration. While possibly reducing the chances of fratricide, centralized execution decreases overall effectiveness by increasing the time required to react. A problem in current joint doctrine is that it describes two basic types of airspace control, positive and procedural, and it asserts that rigorous control is necessary during MOOTW because of political restraints and the many participants involved.<sup>1</sup> Positive control is described as the direction of air assets based on highly technical systems available to the commander, such as electronic identification systems, data links, and communication networks. Procedural control relies on previously agreed upon procedures for all participants.<sup>2</sup> What joint doctrine does not explain is that commanders can combine these two methods of control to allow decentralize execution while maintaining centralized control of the operation. If the ROE permit enforcement aircraft to use onboard systems and simple procedures to identify aerial targets, as in Operation Provide Comfort, then the commander can put the decision to engage in the hands of the operators. Rules of engagement and airspace coordination should enhance and simplify integration and identification among forces so that execution can be decentralized. The Joint Forces Commander needs to continually reevaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of airspace control methods and make adjustments as necessary to achieve air objectives.<sup>3</sup>

Additional study is necessary concerning the long term impact of U.S. military presence in the Gulf. Operation Vigilant warrior was effective in turning back Iraq's forces, but there is no indication that the Gulf Cooperation Council will be able to achieve the same results with primarily regional forces in the near future. The smaller states in the Gulf do not have complete trust in Saudi Arabia, and many perceive a future threat to

regional stability could actually come from a member of the GCC.<sup>4</sup> A lack of collective defense can further lead to over-reliance on U.S. intervention during a crisis. The U.S. should consider a more aggressive “red-line” strategy, with a clearly stated policy toward actions that threaten U.S. interests.<sup>5</sup> This would be an incentive for regional states to strengthen the GCC and also justification for reducing costly overseas deployments.

A key requirement for U.S. involvement in MOOTW is a “commitment to reassess and adjust as necessary the size, composition, and disposition of our forces to achieve our objectives.”<sup>6</sup> It should now be obvious that the southern no-fly zone is not enough to end the oppression of the Shiites. If ending their oppression is truly a U.S. objective, then a reevaluation of the forces in theater and the expected effectiveness of those forces toward attaining this objective is necessary.

The hypothesis that the no-fly zone is an effective strategy for U.S. air forces to support national objectives is supported on grounds that the no-fly zones in Iraq and Bosnia-Herzegovina have had significant effects on long term national objectives in their respective regions. The no-fly zone is an effective tool available to the commander to shape the environment. If more intrusive control of an adversary is desired, then other tools will likely be necessary, such as the threat of air strikes or the introduction of ground or naval forces. U.S. air power is the most capable and proficient in the world today, but it has limitations. U.S. air forces are in a transition from exclusively training for major regional conflicts to training for war and participating in military operations other than war. These other operations place additional limitations on air power and new demands on forces that leaders must understand at all levels of command. Once understood, proper employment can minimize these limitations and exploit the unique strengths of air power.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Joint Pub 3-52, *Doctrine for Joint Airspace Control in the Combat Zone*, 22 July 1995, IV-3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., III-5.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., IV-3.

<sup>4</sup> Nikola B. Schahgaldian, "Iran and the Postwar Security in the Persian Gulf," (Cameron Station, VA: National Defense Research Institute, 26 July 1994), 25.

<sup>5</sup> David A. Shlapak and Paul K. Davis, "Possible Postwar force Requirements for the Persian Gulf: How Little is Enough?" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 1991), 28.

<sup>6</sup> Department of State, "Clinton Administration Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations (PDD25)," in *War and Conflict Resolution*, ed. Maj Ed Marsalis et al. (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, January 1997), 5.

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